



## A Guide to the More at Four Only Environment Rating Scale Assessment (ECERS-R)

Administrators and teachers often feel more at ease when observers are present in their classroom, if they know what to expect. Please review this information with program staff that will be involved in the upcoming Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) assessment(s). This information will give you and your staff a better understanding of the assessment process.

### HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE VISIT

#### *Review and Study the ECERS-R*

Assessors will be using the ECERS-R to assess More at Four classrooms. The rating scale considers many aspects of early childhood environments and pre-kindergarten environments, such as materials for children's use, activities, the daily schedule, health, safety, interactions, language, and communication. ECERS-R is consistent with *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success*. The seven-point rating scale is designed to look at a range of quality beginning with inadequate to minimal care, progressing to good (developmentally appropriate) care, and then to excellent environments for children. It is **extremely** helpful to spend time reading and studying the rating scale carefully, including any definitions in the front of the ECERS-R books and the notes for clarification. More information on how to obtain and study the scale is available at [www.ncrlap.org](http://www.ncrlap.org).

#### *Review Supplementary Materials*

Assessors also use the following materials, which are available on our website - [www.ncrlap.org](http://www.ncrlap.org). These materials will be helpful as you prepare for the visit.

- NC Additional Notes (clarify items and indicators on the rating scales)
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meal Guidelines
- Requirements for Gross Motor Space and Equipment
- Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Guidelines

#### *Conduct Self-Assessments*

Participate in a "self-assessment" before the scheduled assessment, and use the results to prepare your classrooms to maximize the score. Any changes should reflect best practices for young children and should improve the quality of the program on an ongoing basis.

#### *Request Technical Assistance*

You may request information or assistance from the following sources:

- Division of Child Development (DCD) Child Care Consultants (919.662.4547)
- More at Four State Program Consultants, directory accessible at <http://www.osr.nc.gov/MoreFour/contact.asp>
- Local Smart Start Partnership consultants (contact the Smart Start agency in your county or call the NC Partnership for Children - Smart Start (919.821.7999))
- Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) specialists (contact DCD 919.662.4547 for the CCRR serving your area)
- NC Rated License Assessment Project trainers (Nicole Wyrick, 336.315.7723)

### *Prepare Children for the Visit*

Help children in your class understand that they will have a visitor in their classroom for the day. This will help them feel more comfortable when the assessor conducts the assessment.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT THE DAY OF THE ASSESSMENT**

### *Arrival of the Assessors*

The assessors will arrive when the facility opens in the morning or as children arrive. Before the observation begins, the assessors will typically greet the director, principal, or designated individual and provide a brief overview of the day. Assessors will gather the Classroom Information Form and Teacher Information Form (enclosed in the packet). Assessors will also request a copy of the classroom daily schedules and clarify the operating hours of the facility.

### *Facility Operating Hours*

The ECERS-R assessment is based on the length of the day that children are served and is not limited to only the 6-6½ hour More at Four program day. Therefore, a facility's operating hours are considered to be the earliest time that a child may arrive at the facility in the morning and the latest time that a child may leave the facility at the end of the day. Upon entering the classroom to be observed, assessors will introduce themselves to the teachers and briefly explain what they will be doing during the observation.

### *Interacting with Children and Staff*

To ensure a valid assessment, the assessors will not interact with the children or staff during the assessment and will stay in the "background" as much as possible while conducting the observation. If a child wishes to speak or play with the assessor, she will politely redirect the child back to the activity or teacher.

### *The Observation*

The observation will take approximately three to five hours. In order to complete the observation, we need to make sure the observation is representative of what typically happens in the classroom. Therefore, at a minimum, it is required that more than half of the children enrolled in each classroom be present. We also need to see the teacher (s) who is typically responsible for the children. We request that additional staff members not be present unless these individuals are a part of the daily routine for that classroom (e.g., floater that assists daily with lunch). We thank you for your cooperation.

During the visit, assessors will observe a wide variety of interactions, activities, and materials as required by the rating scale. Assessors will observe all spaces used by children in the group including indoor and outdoor gross motor areas, multipurpose rooms, early morning/afternoon care areas, and special activity areas (library, art room, music room, etc).

Assessors will record information throughout the observation. The amount of note taking is in no way an indication as to the quality of the program. We simply have to take detailed notes to ensure that sufficient information is available to accurately score each item. Assessors use the information gathered through direct observations and teacher interviews to rate each item on the ECERS-R.

### *Interview with Staff*

The ECERS-R requires a 30-to-45 minute interview with a classroom staff member after the observation to ensure accurate scoring. The interview may take place during nap or rest time, and is usually conducted in a room other than the classroom, if the staff-to-child ratio is maintained. The interview allows assessors the opportunity to clarify the daily schedule with the teacher and find out additional information about his/her classroom since not every activity or material that is included in the rating scale will be observed. At this time teachers do have the opportunity to share any additional information they would like assessors to know about their classroom.

### **After the Assessment**

When the assessment is completed, assessors will leave the classroom and notify the site administrator of their departure. Unfortunately, assessors will be unable to give any feedback to site administrators and/or classroom staff on the day of the assessment. After observing, taking notes, and interviewing the classroom staff, assessors must look at all the information collectively before giving any feedback. They will, however, write a detailed summary of their findings. This feedback is presented in a document called an Assessment Report or AR (formerly named FSR, Facility Summary Report). The AR is designed to provide specific feedback so that early childhood educators and site administrators may enhance their program's quality through goal setting and other quality enhancement efforts. Your AR will be sent to the More at Four State Program typically within 15 working days. The More at Four State Program will forward the AR to the Local More at Four County Contractor. The Local Contractor is responsible for disseminating and discussing the AR with site administrators and teachers.

### **How to Use the Assessment Report**

Local More at Four site administrators and classroom staff may use the results to determine if, and to what extent, program improvements are needed to maintain environment quality or improve certain program components. Programs may also conduct self-assessments using the ECERS-R to monitor and track progress over time.

The More at Four State Program will work with sites and classrooms that score below the 5.0 minimum program standard, as required by the More at Four guidelines. For these classrooms, an enhancement or intervention plan must be developed and submitted to the More at Four State Program, describing what changes will be made to the classroom to improve the score on the next assessment. Typically this involves working with a More at Four State Program Consultant to identify goals and specific improvement strategies (e.g., scheduling technical assistance, visiting other quality programs, participating in professional development), and a timeline for achieving results. Subsequent assessments will be scheduled to ensure that classrooms maintain the minimum 5.0 program standard or higher. [Note: MAF Classrooms in the enhancement or intervention process will be scheduled for a follow-up ECERS-R in the following program year. Classrooms must score at least a 5.0 on the ECERS-R during the follow-up visit.]

More at Four State Program Consultants will work with the contractor, site administrator, and classroom teachers to develop a plan, as described in the written materials that will be sent to each More at Four Contracting Agency following the assessment. Regardless of the score, each Contractor should review the classroom's results with each site administrator and classroom staff.

If you have questions about the AR, please call the More at Four State Program Consultant assigned to your county/region. Directory of More at Four State Program Consultants accessible at <http://www.osr.nc.gov/MoreFour/contact.asp>

### **Additional Information**

For currently licensed facilities the More at Four Only ECERS-R assessment will not affect your star-rated license, and is used only by the More at Four State Program for program monitoring and technical assistance.

Since these scores are not used in the determination of the number of points/stars awarded on your rated license, there will be no grievance process to dispute scores. Questions, however, related to assessment results may be submitted in writing to the NC Office of School Readiness, Program Section Chief: Jody Koon.

If you have further questions about the formal assessment process used to increase a program's stars for the rated license, please contact your DCD Child Care Consultant for details.